

## **A Bakersfield hidden gem? Snow-covered mountains, right after the wind and rain**

By Teddy Feinberg

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In the midst of a low-pressure system last week came what typically happens in Bakersfield following such an event: consistent rainfall, a steady breeze kicking in, puffy clouds in the sky, and, alas, improved air quality. In turn, a vast view of snow-covered mountain ranges surrounding the city was on full display.

And it was not just prominent heading from Bakersfield south toward the Grapevine or east toward Tehachapi.

A look westward showed the coastal range beckoning in the distance beyond Taft. When heading east on Highway 58, a peek north showed a clear picture of the Southern Sierra Nevadas, while a glance south caught a glimpse of the Tehachapi Mountains.

Improved air and the scenic views can alter one's perspective and offer a reminder that nature's beauty is in fact right on the doorstep of the southern San Joaquin Valley.

"Bigger weather systems bring low pressure, often bring wind and often bring rain. That pushes the pollution out and we have lovely air quality," said Jaime Holt, chief communications officer for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"It shows how clean the valley air can be, and how beautiful the valley is."

Todd Hansen, who's been a Bakersfield resident since 1993, said he and his family hiked last weekend in the hills of Hart Park, where the snow-packed scenery was pristine.

"I just loved it. Gorgeous. The setting was perfect," Hansen said. "We stopped off on our way home, took a look at the river. It was a great opportunity to get away. And that's a great thing about Bakersfield — 15 minutes, a half-hour, and you're really away."

Brian Ochs, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford, said after a dry November, the last five days of the month "really started getting after it," from a precipitation standpoint.

He said although last week's rainfall was slightly above average, the winter months will typically see one or two storms a week come through the southern valley.

It's a far cry from summer, when high temperatures and dry conditions lead to air pollution build-up.

"Not only do you get the clear air, you get winds from the south and southeast that pick up. That really helps. Especially during the winter," he said.

Ochs pointed out a few rainfalls could be in store this week. Precipitation is in the forecast for Wednesday and could also be in the offing Friday night into Saturday, he said.

Holt added the coming days could continue offering the same clean air and clear views — as long as people continue to do their part and follow directions on any no-burn days.

"We're anticipating the rest of the week will look good from an air quality standpoint," she said.